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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000682

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: PUSHING GUTIERREZ TO VOTE YES ON CUBA

REF: QUITO 625

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie Kenney, Reason 1.4 (b)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: President Lucio Gutierrez has assured that Ecuador will "no worse than" abstain on the upcoming UN Human Rights Commission resolution on Cuba. A yes vote appears a political Pandora's box, he believes, likely to unite and embolden his many detractors across the political spectrum. Although convinced abstention is the best he can offer, Gutierrez promises to listen to further USG entreaties on Cuba. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) Over breakfast March 28, Gutierrez and the Ambassador touched on topics ranging from OXY nationalization to travel to Caracas (Septels); none mattered more than the Geneva vote on Cuba, however. The Ambassador offered numerous reasons to support sanction of Castro, highlighting a worsening human rights situation on the island and the moral necessity to condemn it formally. Ecuador had voted yes before (in 1999); the USG hoped it would again. She planned to discuss the Geneva resolution at length with FM Patricio Zuquilanda in a meeting three days hence. The Ambassador concluded by noting high-level Washington policymakers might soon be ringing the president, seeking the GoE's support.

[13.](#) (C) Gutierrez seemed well-briefed on the UNHRC resolution. Agreeing Castro was no defender of human rights, he too deplored conditions in Cuba. Ecuador, Gutierrez promised, would "no worse than" abstain when the resolution came to the floor. But a display of support was a different matter. To maintain political stability and minimize public disturbances, Gutierrez needed to keep Ecuador's far-left and indigenous off of the streets. Voting against Castro, he claimed, would invite wide-scale protests in Quito, the Cuban dictator's appeal spanning the political map..

[14.](#) (C) Despite his misgivings, the president remained open to USG lobbying, asking only for an Embassy heads-up in advance of calls from Washington. He also sought intel on other South American nations' UNHRC voting positions, hinting he might allow an anti-Cuba vote if Ecuador's neighbors supported it. Gutierrez had heard, however, that Brazil was dead-set against Castro condemnation, and was in fact seeking hemispheric unity in opposing it.

[15.](#) (C) COMMENT: On Cuba, getting Ecuador to yes requires a multi-front effort. We'll continue to push every local button possible, from calls on Cabinet members to media placement of anti-Castro messages. From Washington, telcons with GoE leaders could help, as would pressing the Ecuadorian embassy. We should continue lobbying in Geneva, as Ecuador's overseas missions often exercise autonomy and vote counter to home office instructions. To have a realistic chance of attaining a yes vote, however, we must address Gutierrez's core concern: his political vulnerability at home. END COMMENT.  
KENNEY